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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2527  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2866  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 3350  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5747  
RUEHBA/AMCONSUL PERTH 1353  
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 3180  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 002288

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, DRL, DRL/AWH, DRL/IRF

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SUBJECT: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM -- CULT LEADER ARRESTED FOR  
BLASPHEMY

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: An Indonesian religious cult leader, Lia Eden, and a clutch of her followers were arrested on December ¶15. They face charges of blasphemy for "insulting Islam" after they distributed some leaflets in a peaceful protest. The cult leader has gotten entangled with the law before, and she has been mentioned in past International Religious Freedom reports. Her idiosyncratic views are widely unpopular with Muslims and Christians. Activists have complained about the GOI's move. Mission has reiterated to contacts the importance of religious freedom protections. END SUMMARY.

#### CULT LEADER AND FOLLOWERS ARRESTED

¶2. (SBU) Indonesian police have arrested a well-known religious cult leader. Lia Eden--leader of a small cult called "Kingdom of Eden"--was arrested on December 15 along with 23 of her followers. Jakarta Police say Eden was detained for "her own protection" after she distributed 1,000 leaflets to government offices, including National Police headquarters and the President's Office, calling for the abolition of all religions. (Note: The theology of her sect is idiosyncratic, with some Christian influences. Eden routinely claims to be the incarnation of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. She also claims to communicate with "God's messenger Gabriel." Eden's son, Abdul Rahman, has also faced arrest for claiming to be the reincarnation of the Prophet Muhammad.)

#### POLICE EXPLAIN REASON FOR ARREST

¶3. (SBU) The GOI has defended its move to arrest Eden and her followers. A police commander said she was taken into custody in order to protect her from "potential violent backlash" from extremist groups and "to maintain public order." Sources say Eden and her colleagues will be charged under Criminal Code 156(a) for "defaming" religion and "spreading hostility and blasphemy." If convicted, she could face five years in prison. In 2006, Eden was convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to two years in jail. She was released in October 2007.

#### ACTIVISTS EXPRESS CONCERN

¶4. (SBU) No one defends the substance of Eden's often odd and widely unpopular views. Activists, however, allege that her religious freedom rights are being denied. Representatives of Legal Resources Center--"ILRC"--an NGO focused on legal defense for human rights activists and others--say that the arrests violated constitutional protections and a 2005 Indonesian law, which states that the "freedom to practice a religion may only cease if it violates the law and/or disrupts other people's basic rights." The law was enacted after Indonesia's ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Activists say she has been practicing her beliefs for years, has neither physically harmed nor intimidated anyone, always making her points in a peaceful manner.

#### PRESSING FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

¶5. (C) As mentioned, Eden has gotten entangled with the law before, and she has been mentioned in past International Religious Freedom reports. Mission has engaged the GOI on the importance of upholding all citizen's rights to freely practice their religion. Pol/C has underscored these points in recent meetings with Department of Foreign Affairs and other contacts, as well as with members of parliament. At this point, the GOI seems inclined to let the legal process move forward, although we heard that it was possible that the government might release Eden and her followers in the near future.

HUME